NEXT IN IMPORTANCE AFTER THE REVENUE CUTTER FLEET, DESCRIBED HERE ON JUNE 30 IN THE N

LIFESAVING SERVICE.

One of Uncle Sam's Most Useful "Navies"—686 Boats.

[From The Tribune Bureau.]

Washington, July 13.—Buried in the last annual report of the Secretary of the Treasury a few figures are set forth in about the smallest type the government printer could find which show that in the last fiscal year the lifesaving service had recorded 848 marine disasters, in which was involved the fate of 5,320 persons and $15,041,140 worth of property. In the same modest type the table further announces that only twenty-nine of these 5,320 imperilled persons lost their lives and more than $12,000,000 of the endangered $15,000,000 worth of property was saved to the owners. In the same period 811 shipwrecked persons got relief at the various lifesaving stations, and out of the hundreds of vessels that were in distress and were aided by the service only forty-nine were actually lost.

If any additional figures were needed to prove the profit of the lifesaving service to the government and to the people of the United States, the Secretary's report adds that the cost of maintaining the wonderful organization for the twelve months was only $1,832,465 93.

The lifesaving service offers a good example of the growth of Uncle Sam's sea power, for although nearly all the 278 stations under its control are built upon terra firma and belong to the land the operations of the system are directed to the water and make part and parcel of the ocean's history. In the beginning of the year 1871 there were no lifesaving stations managed by the government. But in that year a few stations were established upon the dangerous coasts of Long Island and New Jersey, and since that time every stormy spring and fall has found more men enrolled in the service to fight the waves and more stations within sight of the rocks and sands where vessels meet their doom. To maintain the lifesaving service requires a navy larger than any that floats the flag of a seacoast Latin republic. Indeed, many of the Old World powers would be proud to claim as many boats in their naval lists as are under the orders of the general superintendent of the United States Lifesaving Service. Counting all varieties of bottoms larger than ordinary skiffs and rowboats, which are not enumerated, the service has 686 in commission. Of this list 277 are open surf boats, 254 self-bailing surf boats, 72 self-bailing and self-righting lifeboats with centreboards, sails and oars; 49 district and station supply boats, 7 self-bailing and self-righting lifeboats propelled by gasolene, sails and oars, 7 power surf boats, 8 other power boats of various kinds and 2 floating stations.

The personnel comprises a class of men that for hardihood, devotion to duty and self-sacrifice it would be difficult to duplicate anywhere in the world. As at present organized the service has 200 stations upon the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, 60 upon the coasts of the Great Lakes, 17 upon the borders of the Pacific and 1 at the Falls of the Ohio, near Louisville.

It is no child's play to safeguard ten thousand miles of coast, especially in the months of stormy weather. The proper protection of the Pacific border would be easy enough, for storms of violence are not often encountered south of the Golden Gate. But along the Atlantic seaboard, all the way from Florida to Maine, commerce is menaced by the winds and waves every month in the year. From the extreme end of the coast of Maine to Race Point, on Cape Cod, there are only sixteen lifesaving stations. The Massachusetts Humane Society—a venerable institution operating under the volunteer system—aids the government in guarding the coast of the old Bay State and makes the task proportionately easier. Ten stations are situated along the shifting sandbars of grim Cape Cod itself. From Monomoy, the elbow of the Cape, to Montauk Point there are only nine stations, for the coast is somewhat similar to that of Maine, forbidding in appearance, but with its numerous inlets and sheltered coves offering convenient protection to vessels of the greatest draft.

There are thirty-nine lifesaving stations situated on the coast of Long Island and forty upon the Jersey sands. Further south, where hurricanes play hide and seek with each other off the Carolinas, the stations are almost within sight of one another; from Cape Henlopen to Cape Charles, a distance of 116 miles, there are sixteen stations, and from Cape Henry to Cape Hatteras, a stretch of 121 miles, the government has twenty-three, each with its equipment of brave men, lifeboats and lifesaving apparatus. South of Norfolk the stations are placed further and further apart, until, where the sea water is always warm and the skies are almost always clear, off the southern Florida coast, the regular stations are no longer needed and only an occasional shedlike structure is located, designed for the use of mariners or others whom stress of circumstances has cast away upon the uninhabited shores. These sheds are called relief stations, or houses of refuge, and are provided with food supplies sufficient to sustain a number of hungry men for a considerable period. There are frequent stations along the Gulf Coast, where the "northers" are so much dreaded by the seafaring folk. North of San Francisco, on the Pacific Coast, the more dangerous points and stretches of beach are guarded by lifesaving crews.

During the eight months of the year that the Great Lakes are open to navigation the lifesavers are busy patrolling the twenty-five hundred miles of coast line that constitute the shores of these unsalted seas. There are few natural harbors along the lakes, and the artificial ones, being for the most part formed by breakwaters or extended piers, are difficult to enter in the continuance of a storm. Those who are familiar with the convulsions that so often break out upon the surface of these lakes declare that the fiercest of ocean storms are not to be compared with them for deadly severity and ship destroying violence. Forty-five lifesaving stations are situated at intervals along the lake coasts, and all have given good account of their intrepid crews.

The only floating lifesaving station within the United States, and, it is believed, in the world, except that near Boston, is found at the Falls of the Ohio. Here there is a great dam constructed with wide openings or chutes to facilitate the descent of vessels, the ascent being accomplished through a canal provided with locks. This dam is a continual source of danger to small boats crossing the river to Jeffersonville. Many of them are swept down the chutes, and even vessels of considerable size, if they become unmanageable, are sometimes wrecked in the rapids. To offer immediate aid to the victims of these disasters the government has located a floating station within easy reach of the danger point.

The lifesaving stations upon the ocean beaches are generally situated among the low sand hills sufficiently back of highwater mark to be safe from the reach of storm tides. They are plain structures, designed to serve as barracks for the crews and to afford convenient storage room for the boats and apparatus.

In the majority of the stations the first floor is divided into four rooms—a boat room, mess room (which also serves as a sitting room for the men), a keeper's room and a storeroom. Wide, double doors and a sloping platform extending from the sills to the ground permit the running out of the heavier equipments from the building. The second story of the station contains two rooms—one a sleeping apartment for the men and the other a room for the accommodation of rescued survivors who are from time to time entertained as the government's guests. The stations are usually equipped with two surf boats, a boat carriage, two sets of breeches buoy apparatus, a cart for the transportation of the apparatus, a life car, twenty cork jackets, a medicine chest, and a number of other articles of equipment needed by the crews on and off duty. All the stations on the ocean coast of Long Island, twenty-nine stations on the coast of New Jersey, nine stations between Cape Henlopen and Cape Charles and all the stations between Cape Henry and Hatteras Inlet are connected by telephone.

The chief officer of the lifesaving service is the general superintendent, whose appointment is made by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Sumner I. Kimball, the present superintendent, has held the position for many years, and most of, if not all, the great improvements made in the service have been instituted under his direction. The organization under the superintendent consists of an assistant general superintendent, an inspector, an assistant inspector for each lifesaving district, a superintendent for each district, a keeper for each station and crews of six or seven men, who are officially known as surfmen. The surfmen must be under forty years of age, of perfect physical condition, must know how to handle themselves and their boats in the water and are required to sign articles for the active season, a period of eight months.

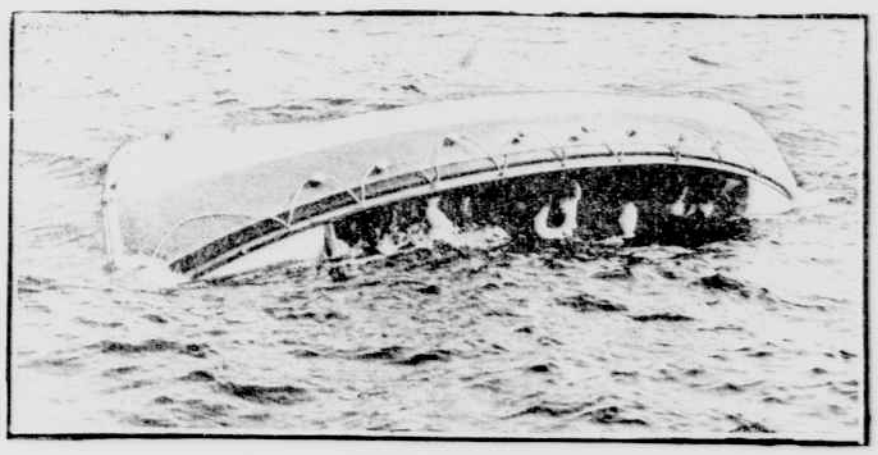
The keepers of lifesaving stations are paid not to exceed $800 a year, while the surfmen receive $50 a month in the active season and $3 for each occasion of service at other times. Beyond the wages mentioned the lifesavers receive no allowance or emoluments of any kind, except the quarters and fuel provided at the stations. They must supply their own food and clothing. No person belonging to the service is permitted to hold an interest in any wrecking apparatus or to be connected with any wrecking company, nor is he entitled to any salvage upon any property he may save or assist to save.

In case a keeper or surfman becomes disabled by injury received or disease contracted in the line of duty he is entitled to receive his full pay during the continuance of the disability, if it does not exceed one year, and upon the recommendation of the general superintendent the Secretary of the Treasury may extend the time for the second year, or a part thereof, but no longer. If any keeper or surfman loses his life by reason of injury or disease incurred in the line of his duty his widow or children under sixteen years of age may receive for two years the pay that the dead man would have received if alive and in the service. If the widow remarries or a child arrives at the age of sixteen the amount that would have been paid to the one or the other goes to the remaining beneficiaries, if any.

At the opening of the "active season" the men assemble at their respective stations and establish themselves for a residence of eight months. They arrange for their housekeeping, usually by forming a mess, taking turns by weeks in catering and cooking, although at some of the stations they engage board from the keeper at a rate approved by the general superintendent. These preliminaries being settled, the keeper organizes his crew by arranging and numbering them in their supposed order of merit, the most competent and trustworthy being No. 1, the next No. 2 and so on. These numbers are changed by promotion as vacancies occur or by such rearrangement from time to time as proficiency in drill and performance of

GUN FOR SHOOTING

UNITED STATES LIFESAVING STATION, WITH SELF-BAILING SURF BOAT CARRIAGE.



UNITED STATES LIFESAVERS GOING THROUGH THE "CAPSIZE DRILL."

CAP AND SLEEVE DEVICE, UNITED STATES LIFESAVING SERVICE.

MOTOR LIFEBOAT, 20-HORSEPOWER, 34 FEET LONG, STATIONED AT SANDY